**Collaborize Classroom Book Club: Facilitator’s Guide**

Here are some suggested guidelines for facilitating your online book club. Remember that each community is different so feel free to adapt these ideas for your school.

**Organizing Your Site:**

If you are using your Collaborize Classroom site to facilitate a school-wide book club, divide participants into groups according to grade level. Use your grouping functions so only members of a given grade level can see the questions for their group and the responses from peers, parents and teachers involved in their conversations.

Grouping by grade level will allow you to:

* Choose titles appropriate to a given grade level.
* Differentiate the language you use for each group to ensure students know what you are asking.
* Limit the size of the conversation to ensure that the number of responses and replies is manageable to read and respond to.

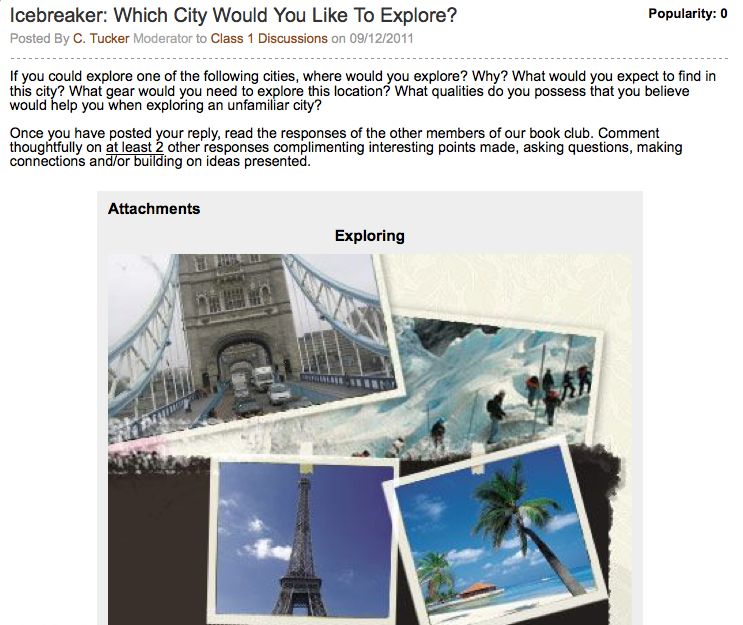
At the start of each month, begin your online conversations by presenting a general question related to the month’s theme. This question can be used to break the ice and encourage students to get to know one another on a personal level before delving into a discussion of the text.

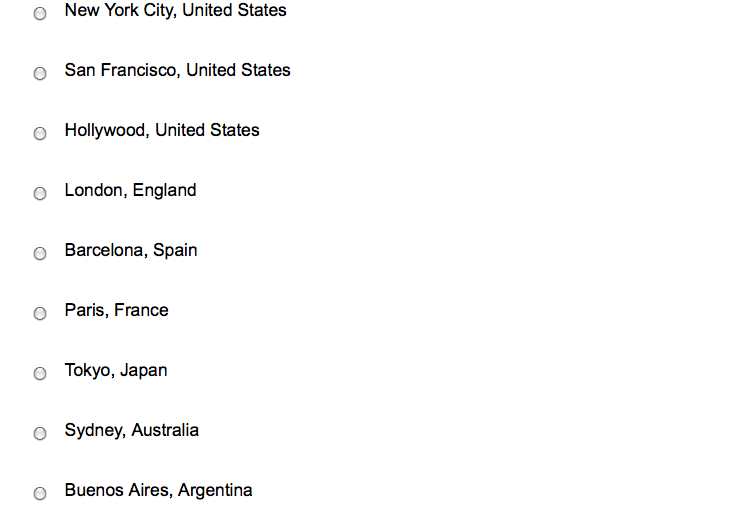
**For example:**

October is Explorers Month so you might consider asking a multiple-choice question like,

If you could explore one of the following cities, where would you go? Why? What would you expect to find in this city? What gear would you need to explore this location? What qualities do you possess that you believe would help you when exploring an unfamiliar city?

* New York City, United States
* San Francisco, United States
* Hollywood, United States
* London, England
* Barcelona, Spain
* Paris, France
* Tokyo, Japan
* Sydney, Australia
* Buenos Aires, Argentina



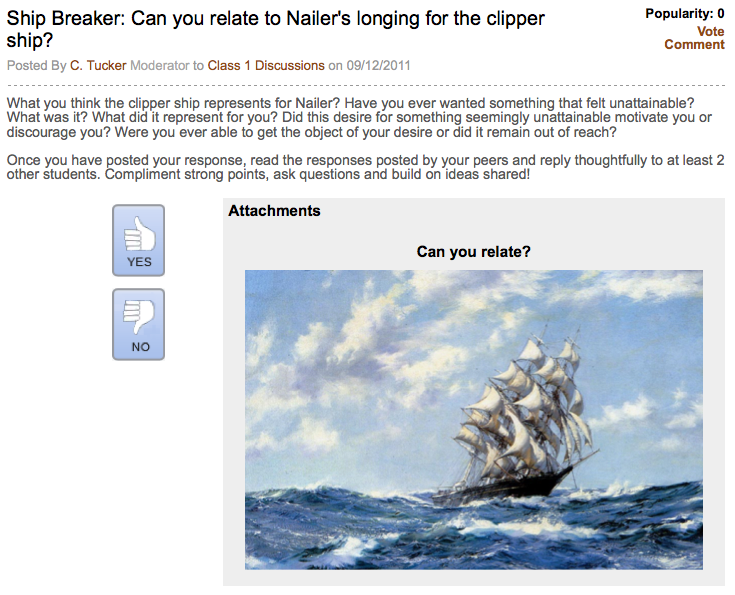


Once the members of you book club have had an opportunity to respond to your icebreaker style question, you can proceed onto discussion questions specific to the book. Use the group’s participation in the icebreaker conversation to compliment strong responses, encourage members of the community to develop their explanations with details/examples and gently correct missteps online.

**Posting Questions for Discussion:**

When designing questions for your book club, it is important to

1. Begin with a catchy title to draw interest.
2. Include media when appropriate.
3. Use a variety of question types to keep the conversations varied.
4. Layer your questions to allow flexibility in the way the members of your community respond to the question.

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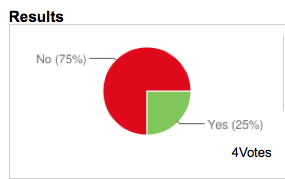
**Frequency and Types of Questions:**

It is important to keep your book club community active and interested. To fully engage your participants it is important to post new questions regularly (approximately 1-3 questions a week) and to encourage your members to respond to a minimum number each week.

Your questions should be a combination of novel specific questions (ex. Are you surprised Nailer tried to save his father?) and more reflective topics (ex. Do you think it is more important to have luck or to be smart?). Combining specific questions about the book with more personal reflective questions will allow students, teachers, and parents to discuss the book specifically but also have an opportunity to connect what they are reading to their own lives. The reflective questions will help your group members get to know one another which will foster relationship building.

**Publishing to the Result Page:**

Make a habit of publishing all of the Yes/No, Multiple Choice and Vote or Suggest questions to the Results Page so your group can see the tangible outcomes of their conversations. You can use the results of a conversation as a spring-board for a follow-up discussion.   
  
For example if you asked the group “Are you surprised Nailer tried to save his father,” you could embed a screen shot of the results into a new discussion question and ask the group if they were surprised by the outcome of the conversation. This would give them an opportunity to reflect on the points made in the initial discussion conversation.



**Facilitation Styles:**

As the facilitator of an online site it is important to decide on your role and make that role transparent to your community. Your facilitation style will depend on a variety of factors. Consider the following questions:

* How many people will be involved in your online book club?
* How many different groups do you plan to create on your site?
* What is the age of your student population?
* Do you have time to design questions and be an active voice in the discussions?

Some facilitators may decide to be **involved participants** in their book club conversations posting their own responses to the questions and replies to other members of the group. Involved participants can model strong responses, engage with the group to form relationships and address questions/concerns within the actual conversation. If you choose to be an involved participant, identify a manageable goal for your own participation. Do not dominate the discussion with a disproportionate amount of postings.

In contrast, a facilitator who is working with a large number of participants may choose to be a **silent facilitator** who focuses on designing questions and creating opportunities for the book club to meet in person monthly or every other month. The silent facilitator sets the stage for conversations by posting thought provoking questions but does not intrude on the conversations. Instead, discussions are driven by the participants and any questions or concerns are dealt with via the internal mail system where participants can communication one-on-one with the facilitator.

**Book Club Events:**

To continue building your community, it is a great idea to plan face-to-face events that build on the work done online. These events can be monthly or once each semester depending on your time and the excitement of the group.

* Get the group together at the end of the month to discuss the end of the novel.
* Plan a potluck where the members of your group bring food inspired by your novel to share.
* Plan a “movie night” where you go to a theatre that is showing the film version of your book or plan to show the movie in the library if it is out on video or DVD.
* Skype with the author of a book you have read.
* Plan a community service project on campus inspired by a piece of non-fiction.

Be creative and engage the members of your book club in planning fun events to make your community stronger. Building a book club community cultivates a culture of reading at your school!